

Blur

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Summary: After a debate over their combat philosophies, Spartan James challenges Spartan Jacob to a duel. This was originally created for my English class, and has been adapted into a one-shot story for my Halo friends to enjoy.

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"I'm telling you, James, that's getting it all backwards!" I looked straight up at him with my best \_you've got to be crazy \_expression. "What good is 'precision' and all that when the other guy shows up right in your grill?"

"And I'm telling \_you\_ that I don't care how much damage you can cause up close, it won't help you when the other guy's still all the way over here!" James, a lean-built man standing at just over two meters and covered from the neck down by blue-and-yellow armor, motioned with his hands to convey a large distance between two people.

"Ummâ€¦ that's why we use cover to advance on the opposition?"

"No, \_I \_use cover! You once said it was, and I quote, 'slow, unnecessary and beneath us Spartans' and hardly ever use it!"

"Because that's exactly what it is!"

"\_But you just said-\_" He stopped while throwing his hands in the air, suddenly lowering them and looking at me with a fierce glint in his eye. "Alright, tough guy, how about we just settle this? You versus me on the training deck, with Kyle and Joseph running interference on us to make it interesting. Two-hundred credits goes to the winner."

I smirked back at him. "Alright then, bring it on; and because I look forward to wiping that smug look off your face so much, I'll even let you pick what simulation we use."

He pulled his silver-visored helmet out from the crook of his arm, donning it. "Well, if you insist... the Impact Arena."

The nearest star wasn't much of one at this distance, and the rest of the "sky" was constellations and floating debris, with the Rose Nebula visible a quarter of a lightyear away. All was quiet due to the lack of an atmosphere and untouched by man, save for an arena-like, roofless structure on one of the larger asteroids, over which a translucent dome had been erected to keep breathable (albeit dry and slightly metallic) air and a decent amount of warmth inside. However within the arena, all was not quiet; in fact, four hellish demons of the Covenant's nightmares were about to be let loose.

The four of us waited for the match to start, each confined to a separate corner of the arena by a holographic ring. The metallic, monotone voice of our A.I., Telemachus, played over the intercom: **\*\*"RUMBLE SLAYER; NO RESPAWNS. BRACE FOR COMBAT, SPARTANS. 5â€| 4â€|"** **\*\***We each drew our primary weapons, checking for possible jams or imperfections, then loading and priming them. **\*\*"3â€| 2â€|"** **\*\***A last-minute self-diagnostic of my armor showed all the components were working properly, and in perfect concert. **\*\*"1â€|"** **\*\*** The moment the barriers went down, I exploded onto the field. Immediately I ran up the nearest ramp onto the second level of the arena, scanning my surroundings; I was hoping to get lucky and be able to take out James right away, eliminating the need to fight the other two.

Unfortunately, the first thing I saw instead was Kyle, and more unfortunate is that he noticed me at the same time. For a fourth-generation Spartan, he was huge; a couple decimeters taller than James, even without his armor. It was was a deep maroon, with massive Ricochet-class shoulder guards, and his helmet had a gold visor, although it was more like a pair of lenses with how much of it was covered in extra plating. Most intimidating, however, was the huge backpack he carried, full of rounds for his M739 light machine-gun that was fed by it from an ammo belt. In other words, he's tough and relentless, but also very slow. Immediately he pulled the weapon to bear and started spraying. I rolled to my right, taking cover behind a small freestanding wall to let my shields recharge, as several of his 7.62x51mm FMJ-APs had managed to drain them by about 40%, before I remembered this was all to prove a point, and to do that I had to get psyched. Come on, Jacob, you're a Spartan-III! This punk is just an S-IV, little more than an Army grunt in Mjolnir armor by comparison! You can take him! As I let my instincts take over I could see myself leaving cover and charging the giant before me, weapon in hand and adrenaline flowing.

My name is Jacob-G310, and I probably should have just stayed in bed this morning. A thundering **\*\_P-WOOM!\*\_** came from my M45D Tactical Shotgun, followed by a quick **\*\_chik-chak\*\_** as I pumped the weapon again with a custom-made foregrip. Bits of titanium alloy were flung from the armor of my digital opponent by the blast, which plinked and pinged harmlessly off the exterior of my black-and-red MJOLNIR/Powered Assault Armor, like drops of water in a spring shower. The armor was unique to me, made different from that of any other

Spartan; a small shelf of extra shotgun shells was mounted on the left hip and right forearm of the suit, both now run dry. My left thigh bore a large cloth pouch, which right now mainly carried extra grenades. Finally, over my left collarbone, was a large kukri knife, with a ring on the hilt for my fourth finger to fit through. The man underneath the armor isn't so interesting, if you ask me; I'm in my mid-20s, with hazel eyes, and a bit short for a Spartan; 1.98 meters tall, 100.43 kilograms. As a civilian, my brown hair was fairly spiky, but of course it's now a thin buzz-cut. Taking a moment to catch my breath, I checked my helmet's Heads-Up Display, only now realizing I was down to my last set of shells. Not for the first time, I mentally slapped myself for allowing combat enthusiasm to control me where combat longevity was more important. As the body finally fell to the ground and my victi- er, opponent exited the simulator, a voice crackled in over the communications channel: "Was that really necessary, Killzone? You charged poor Murphy from almost ten metres on open terrain just now."

I scowled for a moment. I know James just wants me to be more efficient, but sometimes he simply doesn't appreciate the beauty of close-quarters combat. "I've still got five 8-gauges left, Monsoon, and one of them has your name on it," I replied with a grin. I knew he was smiling back on the other end; the two of us had known each other for a while, this was just banter. He calls me Killzone because, as even I have to admit, I'm a bit ax-crazy. The exact story is from years ago, when the two of us had to defend a communications outpost from the Covenant in the Sol System's asteroid belt. Everything was going fine, until James was knocked unconscious; oh, he was fine, but out of sight, so I didn't know what had happened. Desperate, fed up with those freaks, and worried for my friend, I drew as many of them into one area as I could, and just let loose; everything's a blur to me after that, and of course James didn't see it either, but the cameras built into our helmets did; and after about 15 minutes when I started seeing straight again, virtually nothing within a 500-meter radius of where I stood was still in one piece.

Snapping my thoughts back to the present, I noticed another opponent show up as a red blip on my motion tracker, but it quickly disappeared and was replaced with several more blips that floated about at random. Joey, my twin brother, was trying to sneak around me with his Active Camouflage ability, a hardware module that rendered him almost invisible, with the interesting side effects of dampening sounds he made and confusing nearby sensors. Slowly, so as not to spook him, I put away my shotgun for now, and drew my sidearm: the M6H, either the world's biggest handgun or the world's smallest rifle. Racking the slide with a quick \*\_C-clink\*\_ and disengaging the safety, I pulled the weapon to eye level and started scanning my surroundings, ready to go for my knife if need be. \_Alright, smart guy, \_ I said to him in my head. \_We can play this your way. \_

Joey had always been a cloak-and-dagger fighter, albeit more so in his days as an ODST. Although the interference he created on my motion tracker could give me clues to his location, it was still interference and thusly does little good; I had to let him come to me, keep my eyes peeled. Eventually, I saw a slight distortion in the appearance of a nearby wall in my peripheral vision. \_There!\_ Time slowed to a crawl as I was able to let loose three 12.7x40mm SAP-HE's in quick succession from my Magnum, the first hitting Joey on the right clavicle, making his energy shields flare for a moment, showing

his figure coiled like a snake. By the time the second round hit the top of his helmet, he'd already sprung out of hiding in a similar fashion, the sudden movement overtaking the Active Camouflage and revealing the pale white-and-black armor he wore, complete with a narrow, menacing red visor. Twisting mid-air while he leapt at me, the third shot missed him while he whipped out his M7S silenced sub-machine gun and sprayed several 5x23mm caseless FMJ rounds of his own into my midsection, then grabbed me in a Fireman's Carry while his back was facing the ground and we both went down. Maintaining his momentum, Joey backflipped off from where we'd landed, all his movement thus far being performed in one fluid motion, and was about to disappear again when he suddenly stopped, realizing that in that moment of contact, I'd managed to attach a Type-1 plasma grenade to his armor, just below the left shoulder blade. He had only enough time to let out a shocked "Wait, wha-" before the luminescent blue orb detonated, blowing away his digital body and showering me with azure sparks. Getting up and dusting myself off, I continued on to meet my real opponent.

I had walked about twenty meters when I saw James standing at the entrance to one of the arena's inconspicuous hallways. He had taken a relaxed stance, his BR85 HB rifle, fitted with an underslung grenade launcher and an infrared targeting laser as usual, magnetically clipped to his back and a T-25 Directed-Energy Pistol on his right thigh. As usual, there were multiple ammunition pouches adorning his torso and left thigh. "\_Heh. \_You made it," he remarked.

"What was your first clue?" I deadpanned in return, pointing out the irony in those words coming from someone who normally shunned unnecessary chatter.

He shrugged. "Probably because you're still alive, and I still haven't won."

\_Huh. He \_is\_ particularly cocky today, isn't he? \_We stood there, staring at each other through our helmets and narrowed eyes, hardly moving save for fingers twitching to see who moved first. A tumbleweed went by, probably some attempt at humor on Telemachus' part. Quickly getting bored, I broke the tension by leaping forward and redrawing my M45D. I would've been in range to end it there, but he rolled back several metres and fired first, several small bolts of green plasma flying from his pistol, most of which splattered against my shields and drained them with surprising speed. \_Right, that's always his strategy: plasma drains the shields, bullets destroy armor.\_ I threw another grenade his way in retaliation, but he was smart, knew my tactics, and had prepared accordingly: realizing he wouldn't dodge it in time based on its trajectory, James instead engaged his Armor Lock, hardening the suit's hydrostatic gel layer, overcharging the shields and allowing him to survive the explosion. \_Crud. \_The lock released with a noise akin to several panes of glass being cracked, and we resumed.

When you work with someone long enough, and in our line of work, you really do learn to anticipate them. James and I had been going back and forth for several minutes now, with him constantly trying to keep me at an arm's length with his battle rifle, and me constantly trying to close the distance with my shotgun. He'd pop behind cover for a moment, I'd move up, then he'd move back. We'd circulated the arena multiple times, and we were both getting tired, but I was doing so much faster. Then, the unthinkable happened: we both ran out of ammo.

I stood there, knowing I had to end this yesterday, and I suddenly remembered a saying my friend Jonah had: "When in doubt, blow shit up." Ironically, those were also some of his last words. Checking the pouch I carried, I counted two more plasma grenades. Grabbing one in each hand, I charged forward once more.

\*\*[END OF WAR GAMES RECORDING]\*\*

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file.